

PANJAB

CHANDIGARH.

SAT SRI AKAL.

THE

TEN SWAYYAS

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**GURU GOBIND SINGH.**

Rendered into English & Annotated

BY

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1st Edition {  1,000 copies  } Price 4 annas.

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# INTRODUCTION- THE SWAYYAS - AND NOTES -



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## INTRODUCTION

### I

I have attempted in these pages to translate and comment upon the ten Swayyas or quartrains of Guru Gobind Singh. These Swayyas which constitute one of the Five Sikh Prayers, were composed during 1744-55 B. E., the most prolific years of poetical composition in the career of Guru Gobind Singh. They possess the charm of incomparable felicity, of sublimity and pomp of vision, of a moral persuasiveness that appeals to every generation, of balanced rhythm and rich persuasive sound and of metrical skill that in each line proclaims the master

### II

Guru Gobind Singh, as Latif says, 'was a law-giver on the pulpit, a champion in the field, a king on his masnad and a faqir in the society of the Khalsa.' He has been a unique personality in history, the full bearing of whose life has yet to be realized. He was a Divine Poet, Sage, Reformer, Patriot, Martyr, and Saviour the like of which may not come again.



His great and lasting work was to preach the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man whereby he infused true manliness into the hearts of the people of this land. His military achievements were only a chapter in his life. His political work was infinitesimally small as compared with his spiritual work. The Sikhs regard him as Nanak in spirit and he was so in fact. Like Nanak, he sang of God and glorified God. Like him, he discarded riches and power. "God's name is wealth and treasure to His servants," was the constant theme of his discourses. According to him it is a gross sin even to think of worldly enjoyment.

The times of his advent were very hard. The Hindu social system had deadened the hearts of people. Each individual lived for himself. The feelings of manliness and sympathy were gone. The political disintegration was the order of the day, and it brought in its train other evils, the idea of which was shocking to humanity. A regular campaign under official patronage, was going on forcibly to convert the Hindus to the Muslim Faith. On this heart-rending scene Guru Gobind Singh appeared to the infinite relief of the heavy-laden world, just to preach a new Gospel to the oppressed humanity. A messenger

of the Most High, he was sent into the world to put down rebellion from God's authority, to inaugurate righteousness and to suppress chicanery and fraud in any form. His strength only seemed to grow in proportion to the difficulties he had to encounter and overcome. He had to do his duty — to obey the orders of a Power higher than that of kings, and he did it at all hazards. His was the pleasure, as Emerson says in another connection of giving and not of taking. He gave his "uttermost all" for the service of humanity, and thanked his Creator for the opportunity, He gave him to serve it. His religion was a religion of love to man and devotion to God, and all his life he laboured to see the harmonious developement of his country. Such was he whom we adore! Is there a man in the history of the world who in such a difficult position has had a record so splendid?

KHALSA COLLEGE;  
*January 18th, 1924.*

} HARNAM SINGH,







# The Swayyas of Guru Gobind Singh.

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BY THY GRACE.

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## I

I have gone about seeing the Jain monks and  
Vaishnavs of all ascetic orders and the Yogis and  
Celebates of all schools;

And Heroes, demi-gods feasting on nectar, and  
crowds of saints of various sects.

I have seen the religions of all countries, but  
have found none that is of God, the Lord of life.

Without a particle of the love and mercy of  
God, they are not worth a grain.

## II

There have been kings riding on proud elephants covered with gold and beautifully caparisoned and richly painted.

They were possessed of innumerable horses bounding like deer and in swiftness leaving even wind behind them.

Countless mighty princes used to come and pay obeisance to them.

Where are such great lords of the earth? All had to depart naked after all.

## III

What if emperors went about conquering many lands and countries with drums beating and trumpets blowing?

With handsome elephants deeply roaring and thousands of royal steeds neighing.

Rulers of past, present and future who can count? Their number cannot even be conceived.

Verily, verily, I say to ye all that those who do not remember God and fear Him, will be doomed to perdition.



## IV

Men bathe at the places of pilgrimage, in charity give money as alms, exercise abstinence and perform various special ceremonies—

I have seen the Vedas, the Puranas, the Quran and the Western books and the stories of the Heavens and the earth described therein.

I have carefully observed everything about the thousands of fasters, and celebrities who practise continence.

Yet without worshipping the Lord, God of the earth, they are of no account.

## V

Trained soldiers, powerful, irresistible, well-ecoutred with coats of mail crush their enemies;

Filled with high martial spirit they may put mountains to flight, themselves unshaken;

They may shatter their enemies, destroy rebels and trample down the pride of furious elephants;

Yet without the favour of God, the Great Master, they shall all depart at last and leave the world.

## VI

Formidable heroes, very valiant, without hesitation face the edge of the sword;

Subdue countries, crush rebels and put down the pride of furious elephants;

Break strong forts and even without fighting conquer in every direction--

But their efforts avail not; the Lord is the Commander of them all--the suppliants are many while there is but one Giver.

## VII

Even demons, gods, serpent-gods, and ghosts shall repeat God's name for ever and for ever.

All living beings which are in the sea and land shall set up God in their hearts every moment of their lives.

The glories of Virtue shall increase and they shall ring triumphant everywhere. The multitudes of Evil shall be destroyed.

All good men shall go about happy in the world; and all their enemies shall be cowed down by their sight.



## VIII

Lords of men and elephants, and rulers who reign in the three worlds,

Who perform millions of ablutions, make gifts of elephants and other animals, and marry brides by various ceremonies of the swayamvara—

They with Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu, the Lord of Lakshmi, shall at last be entangled and fall into the noose of Death;

But they who cling to the feet of the Great Master shall escape the round of transmigration.

## IX

What availeth it to sit closing both eyes in meditation like a crane?

What availeth it to go about bathing at the seven seas? In this way people lose this as well as the next world.

They pass their lives in vain, ingrossed in different passions.

Verily, verily I say unto you; hear ye all—only those who practise love obtain the Lord.

## X

Some people take idols and reverentially place them on their heads; some wear the Lingam round their necks.

Some take God to be residing in the East; some bow their heads towards the West.

Some benighted people worship images; some adore tombs.

The whole world is entangled in false pursuits.  
No one has found the secret of the Lord God.





## NOTES.

## I

According to the Sikh Gurus, "Whoever was saved in the ancient or modern times, it was through love and devotion to the Lord." Hence austerities and mechanical charities are of no avail. Loyalty of the heart to the cause of God is wanted.

**Jain Monks**—A sect of Jainism known as Saravagis. They conform in many ways to Hindu customs.

**Vaishnavs of all asectic orders**—The Sudhs mean the clean in contradistinction to the Saravagis who are reputed to be dirty in their habits. The Sidhas in Sanskrit are persons who by the practice of Yog are popularly supposed to acquire extended life and miraculous powers. They hold that by practising certain mental and physical jugglaries men can float in the air, shake the foundations of the earth, force the skies to send rain, and perform certain other tricks which go against the ordinary laws of Geography. According to Sikh belief self-surrender is higher than the powers of Sidhas, for the latter denote a desire for independance from God's Law.

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**Yogis—Yog** originally meant the union of the soul with God, and may be compared with the etymological meaning of the word 'religion.' They who practised Yog were called Yogis. The word Yog is now applied to certain practices of the Yogis which are detailed in the Aphorisms of Patanjli. Gorakh Nath, the founder of the sect lived many centuries ago. The ear—rings, the wallet, the patched gaberdine, and the staff are the symbols of the Yogis. They slit their ears and make Shiva the special object of their worship. They believe that nectar falls or trickles from the brain in a state of exhaltation. In Yog philosophy the breath is supposed to wander in sixty eight chambers of the body.

**Celebates—Men** vowed to perpetual continence.

**Heroes—**The word in the original is 'Surs', which in the Sikh Scriptures is used for spiritual heroes.

**Grain—**The word in the original is 'Ratti' the seed of *Abrus precatorius* (N. O. Leguminosæ) used in India as a small weight. Here it means a possession of insignificant value. The word is also often used for Pschy of Greecian My thology.



## II

The Swayya records what the Guru thought of people who led armies, conquered lands, built fortresses and prided themselves on being great victors and commanders. A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches and loving favour rather than silver and gold.

## III

Hundreds and thousands of such passages are interspersed over the writings of Gurm Gobind Singh. In the face of these how puerile looks the statement that Guru Gobind Singh "dwarfed the unity of a religious sect into an instrument of political advancement".

## IV

Pilgrimages, austerities, alms—giving and mechanical charities are of no avail. There are no incarnations and no special revelations. All religious books are human creations, some good, others not so good. They are the results of human attempts to interpret the ways of God to man.

The Vedas—They are the Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharv, composed in the most ancient form of the Sanskrit language. In Sikh Literature these are named the white, the red, the yellow and the black Vedas.

The Puranas—sacred books of the Hindus, eighteen in number. They are the principal authorities for the idolatry and superstition of the Hindus.

Western books—the word in the original is “Ketaban” which in the Sikh Scriptures is used for the Psalms of David, the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Quran.

The Quran--The Mohammeden Scripture.

The Stories of the Heavens and the earth--The Hindus and the Mohammedans agree in believing that there are fourteen worlds, seven above, and seven, including the earth itself below. According to the Hindus these worlds emerged from the mundane egg when divided into two equal parts. But says Nanak, “There are worlds beyond worlds below, and innumerable worlds above”.

## V

All go unto one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Therefore better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith. For the name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe. Whereas the rich man's wealth is his strong city, the destruction of the poor is his property. Hence all is vanity and vexation of spirit save the worship of the Lord, Most High.



## VI

God is the sure main-stay of the humble and the lowly whose weakness tempts the tyrants to oppression. We must look for His grace and gratefully think of His wonderful bounties and His dealings with men.

## VII

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handy-work. The whole creation reflects His name. Every thing moves within the Providential domain. But whereas the integrity of the men of God guides them the perverseness of the unbelievers destroys them,

Gods and demons—The Mosaic and Zoroastrian systems recognised two principles, good and evil, in the economy of nature. It was the Indian sage Kapila who discerned the three *gunas* or qualities, of goodness, passion and darkness or reality, impulse and ignorance. He beheld good moderately good, and evil everywhere in creation. He believed that these qualities but in different degrees, pervade all things and are the distinguishing characteristics of matter, implanted in it by the Great Creator Himself. The gods possess goodness in excess, the demons darkness and men passion.

## VIII

“God and God’s servant are both one--deem not that there is any difference between them—As waves produced from water are again blended with it”.

The three worlds ..... The Heavens, the earth and the nether regions.

Swayamvar .....An assemblage in ancient times at which a young woman selected her husband.

Brahma etc ..... According to Hindu belief the orderly evolution of the universe is entrusted to three deities, Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver and Shiva, the destroyer. They constitute the Hindu trinity. The Sikhs hold that they were created to obey His Will.

Lakshmi.....The Hindu goodess of wealth and riches, consort of Vishnu and mother of Kam, the god of love.

Transmigration — “Life is like the wheel circling on its pivot; O Nanak ! of coming and going there is no end.” But whosoever accepteth the Guru’s Word, shall have his sins pardoned and shall be saved from transmigration through the eighty four lakhs of animals, and after death shall enter the Guru’s abode.



## IX

Libration lies in His grace. The rituals are of no avail. As for grace very little depends on pilgrimages, auterities, alms-giving etc. A man may conform to all the rituals and ceremonies, and yet die of hunger. Worship of the Lord and loyalty to His cause are eminently Sikh principles.

## X

The Guru believed in and adored the Lord who had no distinctive name or place, no caste or colour, the Immortal and Everliving, Primeval Being, whose grace was not confined to one place or country, but who pervaded all existence enlivining and glorifying all.

Lingam —The Lingam sacred to Shiva is the symbol of procreation. It was worshipped in ancient times in Rome as now in India. Macauliffe has told us that he saw a lingam in the temple of Venus in Pompeii and that he was informed by his Italian guide that it was a stone on which barren women used to sit in thr hope of offspring.

The South—Almost all Hindu places of pilgrimage are situated in the South.

The West—Kaaba, the great cube-like Mohammaden temple at Mecca to which the faithful make pilgrimages lies in the West.







Tract No. 49.



PUBLISHED BY

**THE SIKH TRACT SOCIETY,**  
**KHALSA COLLEGE,**  
**Amritsar.**



February 1924.

PRINTED BY

**Bhai Harnam Singh, Bhaura, Printer,**

AT THE

**ONKAR PRESS, AMRITSAR.**